(a) whether fishermen in Tamil Nadu have threatened to go on agitation if they are denied their traditional rights and access to Kachchativu Islands in Pak Straits which divides India and Sri Lanka; and

(b) if so, the action Government proposed to take to protect their rights?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) (a) and (b) The Government is aware of wide-spread resentment among fishermen in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu over the incidents of attacks on Indian fishermen in the Pak Straits. This issue has been taken up strongly by the Government with the Government of Sri Lanka. The two sides have agreed to implement effectively the measures devised to prevent such incidents. The two Governments continue to discuss all relevant aspects of this matter, including the traditional rights of Indian fishermen in respect of the island of Kachchativu as provided under the Maritime boundary Agreement of 1974 between India and Sri Lanka.

Steps to boost tourism

1115. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps like lifting of Visa restrictions to boost tourism in the country, if so, the details of steps taken in this regard recently; and

(b) what is the number of tourists which Government expect will visit India as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

US Republican Party report on Kashmir

1116. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a report prepared recently by the Republican Party of America has warned that fighting in Kashmir is likely to be escalated and expanded to other parts of India?

(b) whether it is also a fact that according to the report Pakistan has the support of other Islamic countries in wresting Kashmir from India; if so which are those countries; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take or have already taken to meet the new threat and also to convince other countries involved about India's point of view?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) (a) Government are aware of the above statement made in a report entitled "The Kashmir Connection" which has been prepared by the Task Force of Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare of the House Republican Research Committee, a non-official organisation.

(b) The report states that "many Islamist groups believe that the wresting of Kashmir from India would be a great prize acquired at minimal cost and-would inspire their followers and further the cause".

(c) Government remain committed to taking strong and effective measures on the ground to counter terrorist activity aided and abetted by Pakistan. Government are regularly apprising foreign Governments of Pakistan's active involvement in infiltrating men and material into J&K for promoting terrorism.